



# Understanding PTSD

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a medical condition that can arise in response to a traumatic event. You don't need to directly experience the event to develop PTSD. Some people develop PTSD from witnessing traumatic events, learning that the traumatic event occurred to a close family member or friend, or having repeated exposure to details of the traumatic event.

## Symptoms of PTSD may include:

- Intrusive, distressing memories or dreams about the traumatic event
- Feeling or acting as if the event is occurring
- Intense distress and reactions to reminders of the event
- Feelings of detachment or estrangement from others
- Avoidance of things associated with the traumatic event
- Angry outbursts or an exaggerated startle response, problems with concentration, and sleep disturbances

There are other symptoms as well, and you don't have to have all of these symptoms to qualify for a diagnosis. Only a qualified medical or mental health professional can diagnose PTSD.

PTSD can be very difficult to those who experience it. It may negatively affect their relationships, their work habits, their sense of themselves, and their quality of life. However, PTSD is treatable, and there are science-based treatments that can make a big difference.

## Here are some things you can do to support a loved one, friend, or colleague with PTSD:

### Educate yourself

Get to know more about PTSD. The websites of the American Psychological Association (APA) and The International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS) are good places to start.

### Encourage help-seeking

Treatment works. Familiarize yourself with the mental health options available and encourage your loved one, friend, or colleague to talk to someone.

### Be patient

Recovery takes time, and some PTSD symptoms linger following treatment.

### Know your limits

Avoid becoming the sole source of support for a loved one, friend, or colleague with PTSD. Watch out for your own burnout and set reasonable limits around the kind of help you provide.